(c) Aggrieved with the decision of the Central Government in rejecting their applications for grant of pension, the applicants keep on submitting representations/ review petitions for reconsideration of their cases. Such cases are considered, if the applicants furnish additional information/acceptable documentary evidence in support of their claims. Further, the Government has set up a Special Audit Team (SAT) under the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary in-charge of the Freedom Fighters Division, with two prominent freedom fighters as Members, for assisting the Government in expeditious disposal of pending cases.

(d) The communications received from the Members of Parliament are duly acknowledged and the cases forwarded by them disposed of in accordance with the extant policy.

(e) Receipt and disposal of claims for grant of pension is a continuous process. However, the Government have constituted a Joint Committee of Freedom fighters and Officials to look into various problems of freedom fighters. The functions of the Joint Committee, *inter alia*, include the review of the existing procedure for sanctioning pension.

[English]

Melghat Forests

1078. SHRI ANANT GUDHE : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item under the caption "Melghat forests losing animals to poachers" appearing in the "Indian Express" dated July 1, 1997;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government to the observations made and facts of the matter reported therein;

(c) the details of the steps taken/proposed to be taken in this regard; and

(d) the provision of funds made during the current year for Melghat project and steps taken/proposed for effective implementation and monitoring of the project?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra has been requested by this Ministry to enquire into the matter and take immediate necessary steps if the news reporting is correct and intimate the out-come to this Ministry at the earliest possible date.

(d) The Annual Plan of Operation has been received by this Ministry and being processed. Monitoring and Evaluation is done by the Superior officers of the State Government and Government of India, for effective implementation of the schemes/projects.

Misuse of Para-Military Forces for Security

1079. SHRIMATI BHAVNABEN DEVRAJ BHAI CHIKHALIA :
SHRI DILEEP SANGHANI :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the newsitem Captioned "Para-Military Forces Are Being Misused for VIP Security" appearing in the 'Times of India' dated May 23, 1997;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) whether some of the VVIPs who have been provided with SPG security cover have requested the Government for its withdrawal; and

(d) if so, the action proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Due to manpower constraints of Delhi Police, they are utilising the services of the personnel from different para-military forces for static/mobile duties for the security of VIP/VVIPs.

(c) and (d) A request has been received from Shri V.P. Singh, former Prime Minister and his wife and Shri H.D. Deve Gowda, former Prime Minister requesting for withdrawal of SPG. The requests of the Prime Ministers are under examination. Schemes for alternative security arrangements based on latest threat perception which will be required in their cases are being drawn up.

[Translation]

Development of Food Processing Industries

1080. SHRI VISHVESHWAR BHAGAT :
SHRI MAHESH KUMAR M. KANODIA :

Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of fruits and vegetables being produced in the country and the percentage out of this being processed;

(b) the shortcomings in the proper development of the industry; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken for encouraging its modernization keeping in view the development of food processing industries at desired level being the largest producing country of fruits and vegetables in the world?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI DILIP KUMAR RAY) : (a) Production of fruits and vegetables in the country is estimated to be around 100 million tonnes. Processing of fruits and vegetables has increased from 0.5% in 1988 to 1.8% in 1996 of the total production.

(b) and (c) While there is a great potential for growth of the industry, the slow growth can be attributed to factors such as lack of post harvest processing, infrastructure, inadequate linkage between the farmers and the processors, and lack of marketing efforts etc. Government has been taking various steps for development of the Food Processing Industries including fruit and vegetable processing, which inter-alia includes liberalised polices for investment including foreign investment, removal of restrictions thereon, and providing fiscal concessions. Ministry of Food Processing Industries is also implementing various Plan Schemes under which financial assistance is provided to State Governments/ Joint Sector/Cooperative Sector etc.

[English]

Welfare Programmes

1081. SHRI BAJU BAN RIYAN :
SHRI BADAL CHOUDHURY :

Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether he announced a package of programmes for the welfare of the SCs, STs, OBCs, Minorities and other socially disadvantaged groups of the States during his visit to Tripura on April 3 and 4, 1997;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken to implement the same?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) A *Statement* is enclosed.

Statement

Package Programme Announced by the Welfare Minister	Steps Taken for Implementation
1	2
1. For evolving a package of schemes for funding the rubber based development schemes for the poor tribals, SCs, OBCs, and the Minorities, a meeting will be convened in New Delhi shortly, with all concerned Ministers/Departments of the Central and the State Governments, so that the mode of funding to the schemes could be finalised. The National level financial institutions for SCs/STs, OBCs and the Minorities will be associated with funding of the schemes in suitable manner.	A meeting in this regard is proposed to be convened in New Delhi with all concerned Ministers/Departments of the Central and State Govts. and the National level Finance Development Corporations for SCs, STs, OBCs and Minorities.
2. 10 Hostels for ST boys and girls will be sanctioned during 1997-98.	Process for sanctioning the hostels has been initiated and sanction will be communicated shortly.
3. One or two tribal girls Schools will be sanctioned during the 1997-98, under the scheme of Schools for Low Female Literacy Pockets, if the norms are fulfilled.	The details of the scheme called Kasturba Gandhi Swatantrata Vidyalaya is under finalisation. Residential Schools for the girls will be considered for sanction subject to fulfilment of norms.